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WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 6972 of February 8, 1997

National Child Passenger Safety Week, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Children are our Nation's most precious gift, and one of our most profound responsibilities is protecting their health, well-being, and safety. Nowhere is this duty more critical than on America's streets and highways.

Automobile accidents are the leading cause of death for America's young people. It is tragic that a high proportion of these deaths could be prevented, but are not. For example, we know that seat belts save lives—last year they prevented the deaths of almost 10,000 Americans—and, yet, many still fail to wear them.

I encourage all Americans to take a few simple steps to ensure that their families travel safely. The most important rule is also the simplest: The safest place for children is the back seat. Also, parents and guardians must always make sure that children are secured, either in a locked seat belt or in an appropriate child safety seat.

I commend the Department of Transportation for its "Patterns for Life" program, begun in 1996 to focus attention on correct child safety seat use and the proper positioning of children and their safety seats away from air bags. Working through national safety organizations and State public safety and highway offices, this program offers a network of qualified child passenger safety trainers to provide communities with the valuable resources they need to reduce motor vehicle-related deaths and injuries.

Laws exist in every State and the District of Columbia that require proper restraints for younger children. However, 40 percent of our children under five are still not properly restrained. We must do better to enforce the existing laws and protect our precious cargo.

The steps we take now will make our roads safer and our children more secure. My Administration is striving to increase the use of seat belts throughout the Nation. We are also working with automobile makers, car dealers, private organizations, and insurance companies to teach parents how to install child safety seats properly, and new technologies will eventually make air bags safer for children.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim February 9 through February 15, 1997, as National Child Passenger Safety Week. I urge all Americans to help reduce injuries and the tragic loss of life on our highways by buckling up every child in an approved restraint, in the vehicle's back seat. And let us all help spread these important

child safety messages throughout our communities. By doing so, we can save many young lives.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this eighth day of February, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 6973 of February 24, 1997

American Red Cross Month, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Founded over a century ago by Clara Barton, the American Red Cross has evolved from a branch of the International Red Cross into a uniquely American institution, serving our Nation in peace and in war, and through countless natural disasters. Since the Spanish-American War, when the first volunteers brought emergency first-aid and news from home to wounded soldiers, generations of Americans have followed in this grand tradition of service.

Today, in communities across our Nation, a million and a half volunteers stand ready to help their neighbors at a moment's notice. Last year, Red Cross paid and volunteer staff assisted disaster victims across the country by opening more than 3,200 shelters and giving comfort to 172,000 people. The Red Cross also reached 16 million Americans through health and safety courses, including HIV and AIDS education and community outreach programs; collected more than 6 million units of lifesaving blood to keep our national blood supply ready, strong, and safe; and provided immediate counseling and support to the bereaved families of the victims of TWA Flight 800 and ValuJet Flight 592.

Overseas, American Red Cross workers provided emergency communications for our troops in Bosnia; worked with foreign Red Cross societies to rebuild the lives of civilian refugees in places such as the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda; and provided personnel, financial aid, and gifts of goods and services to the victims of international disasters and armed conflicts in every corner of the globe.

Since 1881, the size, scope, and complexity of major disasters have placed an ever-greater demand on the resources of the Red Cross. Yet, the generosity of our citizens has enabled the American Red Cross to continue to fulfill its humanitarian mission, providing assistance to those in need and easing suffering around the world. We must continue this tradition, and, in the spirit of service, support this voluntary agency because it truly belongs to all Americans. Each of us can help keep the American Red Cross strong through our donations of time, money, and blood.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America and Honorary Chairman of the American Red Cross, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws